IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 1 to 8 and replace with Claims 9 to 16:

--9. A process for the production of plants with improved growth characteristics which comprises the following steps:

a. transfer and integration of a DNA sequence coding for a prokaryotic asparagine synthetase in the plant genome

b. wherein said DNA sequence is linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said DNA and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplasts and/or plastids of a plant cell and wherein said plant cell expresses the asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts and/or plastids and

c. regeneration of intact and fertile plants from the transformed cells.

10. A plant cell wherein a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase is expressed in its chloroplasts and plastids.

11. A plant cell according to claim 10 which contains a gene construct which provides a reduced level of expression of endogenous glutamine synthetase activity.

12. A plant, seeds and propagation material containing cells in claim 10.

13. A gene construct comprising a gene encoding a prokaryotic ammonium specific asparagine synthetase operatively linked to a regulatory sequence for the expression of said DNA and import of the asparagine synthetase into the chloroplasts and/or plastids of a plant cell and wherein said plant cell expresses the asparagine synthetase in its chloroplasts and/or plastids.

14. A gene construct according to claim 13, wherein the asparagine synthetase gene is an E. coli asparagine synthetase gene with a chloroplastic leader peptide at its N-terminus.

15. A vector containing a gene construct according to claim 13 which gene construct comprises a sequence which encodes a chloroplastic leader peptide at its N-terminus.

16. A plant cell transformed with the gene construct according to claim 13 or with vector according to claim 15.--